

# Draft FY17 NPS Priorities

## Project Outcomes

**Restoration projects** should be designed to meet one or more of the following outcomes:

1. Result in measurable improvements that meet the USEPA strategic targets,  
Sub-objective 2.1
  - i. Fully restore impaired water bodies that are [not attaining designated uses due to NPS causes](#).
  - ii. Remove at least one specific cause of water body impairment from impaired water bodies that are [not attaining designated uses due to NPS causes](#).
  - iii. Improve water quality in 12-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC) subwatersheds in Michigan. Improved conditions mean that one or more of the designated use impairment causes are removed for at least 40 percent of the impaired water bodies within the subwatershed.
2. Result in measurable improvements in water quality in water bodies that are not meeting designated uses due to NPS causes.
3. Achieve or make substantial progress toward achieving the NPS load reduction targets of an approved TMDL or an approved watershed management plan in areas where a TMDL has not been developed.

**Protection projects** should be designed to meet one or more of the following outcomes:

1. Result in measurable water quality improvement at NPS impacted sites in high quality watersheds.
2. Achieve or make substantial progress toward achieving the land use protection targets of an approved watershed management plan.

**Outreach and Education projects** should be designed to meet the following outcome:

1. Result in measurable change in social indicators (e.g., awareness, behavior, knowledge) for targeted audiences in critical areas and focused on priority pollutants from the approved watershed management plan.

## Areas of NPS Program Emphasis

### *LID and Green Infrastructure*

The NPS Program is encouraging projects that utilize LID and Green Infrastructure to address water quality and quantity issues under certain circumstances:

- Projects must be in watersheds with impairments caused by unstable hydrologic conditions.
- LID or Green Infrastructure must be identified as a high priority activity to address restoration or protection goals in the associated approved watershed management plan.
- LID or Green Infrastructure activities must be focused on critical areas identified in approved watershed management plans.

Projects that appropriately and comprehensively use LID or Green Infrastructure practices to address water quality issues will be more highly regarded.

### *Agricultural Practices*

Targeted and comprehensive approach to farm conservation planning: To be considered a priority for funding, agricultural BMPs must be implemented in a comprehensive manner and targeted to critical areas of the watershed.

Cropland Management Strategies: Higher priority will be given to proposals that meet the following criteria:

- Proposals to address sediment and nutrients from cropland (where there is no manure application) by implementing (at a minimum) all of the following Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) practices on fields proposed for grant funding or for use as match:
  1. Nutrient Management (590)
  2. Residue and Tillage Management, no-till/strip till (329)

3. Cover Crops (340)
  4. Filter Strips (393)
- If the landowner is already implementing some of the practices then funding for the remaining practices is eligible for grant funding as part of the project.
  - Grant funds are only available for implementation of new practices and can include additional practices needed to restore and/or protect water quality. Any additional practices will be funded on a case-by-case basis after considering the causes and sources described in the watershed management plan; the high priority recommendations from the watershed management plan; and the anticipated outcomes described in the grant application.
  - Locations for nutrient management, residue and tillage management, no-till/strip till, and cover crop BMPs do not have to be included in the proposals. However, proposals must state that critical areas will be targeted and a systems-approach will be used. Also, BMP locations must be reported prior to grant close-out.

**Livestock Management Strategies:** Higher priority will be given to proposals that address nutrients and bacteria from manure application or livestock operations by implementing the following practices (at a minimum) on all livestock farms receiving cost-share:

- Comprehensive nutrient management plan (includes no manure application on frozen or snow covered fields).
- Controlled/restricted livestock access to surface waters.
- Residue and tillage management, no-till/strip till
  - For summer or fall manure applications, if tillage is needed for manure incorporation, a cover crop will be planted and no tillage will occur the following spring.
  - For spring applications of manure, if tillage is needed for manure incorporation, then no tillage shall occur the previous summer/fall and a cover crop will be planted during the previous summer/fall.
- Filter Strips.
- Proposals must include a list of the livestock operations that will be targeted. BMP locations must be reported prior to grant close-out.

BMPs at permitted livestock facilities are only eligible where it can be demonstrated they are above and beyond permit requirements.

**Drainage Water Management Strategies:** Managing agricultural drainage water in Michigan can provide benefits such as; conserving subsoil moisture, increasing productivity on tile drained fields, and reducing nutrient loading to surface waters. Drainage water management can reduce loadings of nitrates and soluble reactive phosphorus to surface waters and works most effectively on flat or very gently sloped fields with slopes of 0.5% or less. A priority will be placed on proposals that promote drainage water management strategies in watersheds with appropriate soils and slopes as well as nutrient impairments or flow-related impairments caused, in part, by tile line inputs. Proposals for drainage water management should follow NRCS Standard 554 or equivalent.

## **Funding Priorities (In ranked order)**

### **Tier 1**

Projects focused on water bodies on the 2017 Fiscal Year Targeted Water Bodies list that implement the designated Priority Activities, address the listed pollutants, stressors and sources, and meet one or more of the following outcomes or NPS Program emphasis:

- Restoration of impaired water bodies (Restoration Projects 1.i.).
- Removal of at least one specific cause of impairment from an impaired water body (Restoration Projects 1.ii.).
- Measurable water quality improvements in impaired water bodies or watersheds (Restoration Projects 1.iii. or 2.).

- Measurable water quality improvement at NPS-impacted sites in high quality watersheds (Protection Projects 1.).
- Achieve or make substantial progress toward achieving the land use protection goals of an approved watershed management plan (Protection Projects 2.).
- Successful outreach and education campaign indicated by measurable change in social indicators (Outreach and Education Projects 1.).
- LID, Green Infrastructure, and agricultural projects consistent with the areas of program emphasis above.

## **Tier 2**

Projects for any eligible water body that:

- Meet one or more of the outcomes listed for Tier 1.
- Achieve or make substantial progress toward the NPS load reduction target of an approved TMDL or watershed management plan (Restoration Projects 3.).

## **Tier 3**

Other NPS projects that are consistent with the eligibility criteria and the NPS Program Plan.

Proposals meeting the criteria for Tier 1 will be considered for funding first. Tier 2 projects may be selected over Tier 1 projects based on the projected project outcomes. Tier 3 proposals will be considered last.

Site selection should follow the prioritized list or prioritization strategies in the watershed management plan and implementation should proceed in a logical manner. Projects that include specific sites with landowner letters of support will rank higher than similar proposals that do not demonstrate land owner support.

## **Evaluation Criteria** (in priority order)

- The anticipation that the project will result in a water body meeting one or more of its designated uses.
- The anticipated improvement or protection of water quality.
- The consistency of the project with the priorities identified in the watershed management plan being implemented.
- Site specificity – proposals with site-specific information will rank higher than proposals implementing practices over a defined area (proposals without specific sites identified).
- Demonstration that there is an identifiable source of funds for the future operation and maintenance of the proposed project.
- The anticipated water quality benefits of the project in relation to the cost (although a thorough cost/benefit analysis is not required).
- Whether the project provides water quality benefits to sources of drinking water.
- The ability of the applicant and the partners and contractors to carry out the project as demonstrated by previous NPS grants or submitted information.
- Financial and technical assistance from the partners in the project, as documented by letters of commitment.
- Financial and other resource contributions in excess of the required minimum match. *Note: The percent match listed in the proposal will be used in the project contract if the proposal is selected for funding.*
- Expectations for long-term water quality improvement or protection.
- The balanced distribution of projects throughout the state as part of project selection.